

# The Young Hegel and what drove him

*Reading texts given by Andy Blunden*

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“Although all parties might gain if Germany were to become a state, an event such as this has never been the fruit of deliberation, but only of force – even if it were in keeping with the general level of culture and even if its need were deeply and distinctly felt. The common mass of people in Germany, together with their provincial assemblies, who know only the segregation of communities in Germany and to whom a unification of such communities is something utterly alien, would have to be brought together into a single mass by the power of a conqueror. They would have to be compelled to regard themselves as belonging to Germany.

“This Theseus would have to possess enough magnanimity to grant the people he had created out of scattered groups a share in matters of common concern. Since a democratic constitution such as Theseus gave his people is, in our times and within large states, a contradiction in itself, this share would have to be an organisation of some kind.” (*The German Constitution*, 1802)

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“We can have no cognition of an object, as a thing in itself, but only as an object of sensible intuition, that is, as phenomenon – all this is proved in the analytical part of the Critique; and from this the limitation of all possible speculative cognition to the mere objects of experience, follows as a necessary result. At the same time, it must be carefully borne in mind that, while we surrender the power of cognizing, we still reserve the power of thinking objects, as things in themselves. For, otherwise, we should require to affirm the existence of an appearance, without something that appears – which would be absurd.” [from *Critique of Pure Reason*, by **Immanuel Kant** 1787 Preface]

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“Knowledge of the Idea of the absolute ethical order depends entirely on the establishment of perfect adequacy between intuition and concept, because the Idea itself is nothing other than the identity of the two. But if this identity is to be actually known, it must be thought as a made adequacy. But because they are then held apart from one another in an equation as its two sides, they are afflicted with a difference. One side has the form of universality, the other the opposed form of particularity. Therefore, in order that the equation be completely established, what was first put in the form of particularity must be put in the form of universality, while what was given the form of universality must now be given the form of particularity.” [*System of Ethical Life*, Introduction, 1802-3]

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# The Phenomenology and 'formations of consciousness'

*Reading texts given by Andy Blunden*

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"... The pigeon-holing process of understanding retains for itself the necessity and the notion controlling the content, that which constitutes the concrete element, the actuality and living process of the subject-matter which it labels... A table of contents is all that understanding gives, the content itself it does not furnish at all. "True scientific knowledge, on the contrary, demands abandonment to the very life of the object, or, which means the same thing, claims to have before it the inner necessity controlling the object, and to express this only. Steeping itself in its object, it forgets to take that general survey, which is merely a turning of knowledge away from the content back into itself. ... By this process the whole as such, surveying its entire content, itself emerges out of the wealth wherein its process of reflection seemed to be lost." [*Phenomenology*, Preface §53, 1807]

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"The task of conducting the individual mind from its unscientific standpoint to that of science had to be taken in its general sense; we had to contemplate the formative development (*Bildung*) of the universal individual, of self-conscious spirit. ... The individual, whose substance is mind at the higher level, passes through these past forms, much in the way that one who takes up a higher science goes through those preparatory forms of knowledge, which he has long made his own, in order to call up their content before him; he brings back the recollection of them without stopping to fix his interest upon them. The particular individual, so far as content is concerned, has also to go through the stages through which the general mind has passed, but as shapes once assumed by mind and now laid aside, as stages of a road which has been worked over and levelled out. ... This bygone mode of existence has already become an acquired possession of the general mind, which constitutes the substance of the individual, and, by thus appearing externally to him, furnishes his inorganic nature. In this respect culture or development of mind (*Bildung*), regarded from the side of the individual, consists in his acquiring what lies at his hand ready for him, in making its inorganic nature organic to himself, and taking possession of it for himself." [*Phenomenology*, Preface §28, 1807]

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“The master relates himself to the servant mediately through independent existence, for that is precisely what keeps the servant in thrall; it is his chain, from which he could not in the struggle get away, and for that reason the servant proved himself to be dependent, to have his independence in the shape of thinghood. The master ... relates himself to the thing mediately through the servant. The servant being a self-consciousness in the broad sense, also takes up a negative attitude to things and cancels them; but the thing is, at the same time, independent for him and, in consequence, he cannot, with all his negating, get so far as to annihilate it outright and be done with it; that is to say, he merely works on it. To the master, on the other hand, by means of this mediating process, belongs the immediate relation, in the sense of the pure negation of it, in other words he gets the enjoyment.” [*Phenomenology*, Preface §190, 1807]

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